Press Release

The Cleveland Museum of Art

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MALI ARTIST GIVES FREE MUDCLOTH PAINTING DEMONSTRATIONS; WORK ON VIEW AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Nakunté Diarra, one of the foremost artists from the West African nation of Mali, will appear at The Cleveland Museum of Art on Saturday, March 12, for two free public demonstrations of mudcloth painting, at 10 am-12 noon and 1-3 pm. This is the *first* time Mme. Diarra has ever left Mali, and is part of a three-week visit to Cleveland in conjunction with the exhibition* of mudcloth painting (*bògòlanfini*) by her and her son, Bindé Traoré. Aided by scholar-translators who have worked extensively in Mali and are fluent in the languages of the artists--Bamana and French--mother and son will convey the role this art form, traditionally practiced by women, plays in daily life and life's major transitions, and the changes in *bògòlanfini* as these textiles receive increasing attention in the international art market. Visitors will be able to examine cloths in various stages of the dying process, watch Mme. Diarra at work, and ask questions about technique and design.

Bògòlanfini artists paint on woven cotton with fermented mud, which acts as a brown or black dye. Using bamboo and wood sticks and iron tools, artists make images on the cloth by dyeing the area around the desired image--the "negative space"--then painstakingly bleaching the unpainted images which have emerged, for heightened contrast. All of the design elements Mme. Diarra uses have names and represent images from African myth, history, and cosmology. According to a recent review in *The New York Times*, "What distinguishes [Mme. Diarra's] fabrics from most other mud-dyed cloths are the sharp contrasts achieved between light and dark elements, the clarity of images and the fresh combinations of traditional motifs." M. Traoré represents the developing modern practice of *bògòlan* art, combining conventional and innovative designs in his works.

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An exceptional piece by Mme. Diarra from the Indiana University Museum collection will be on view at the Museum adjacent to the Modern and African galleries through early April. This large display cloth (73.5 x 55 inches) is a complex design of about a dozen abstract motifs ranging in meaning from the zigzag line of "brave man's belt" to the trapezoidal "horse's back."

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*The *bògòlanfini* exhibition, on view in the Cleveland State University Library through April 8, 1994, was organized by the Indiana University Art Museum. The exhibition and programs in Cleveland are sponsored by CSU's Department of Anthropology, Office of Minority Affairs and Human Relations, Black Studies Program, African American Cultural Center, College of Arts and Sciences, International Programs, and the Women's Comprehensive Program; and The Cleveland Museum of Art, CCC-East Campus, the African American Museum, and *Mali Yetu*, a parent-teacher organization.

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